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COMMITTEE ON THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE

REPORT OF THE INTER-AGENCY MEETING ON OUTER SPACE ACTIVITIES

(United Nations Office at Vienna, 7-9 February 1996)

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities was held at the United Nations Office at Vienna from 7 to 9 February 1996. V. Kojamovitch of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization was elected Chairman. The list of participants is attached to the present report as annex I.
2. On behalf of the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna, the Deputy to the Director-General, N. Jasentuliyana, opened the Meeting and welcomed the participants. He noted that the United Nations system was called upon by the international community to carry out more activities with fewer resources in the areas of socio-economic development and humanitarian emergency assistance. To demonstrate to the world its capacity to act as a force for improving social and economic conditions and for promoting global development and human prosperity, the United Nations system should direct its efforts towards implementing the action-oriented recommendations of the Secretary-General, as outlined by him in *An Agenda for Peace 1995*¹ and *An Agenda for Development 1995*,² as well as those of recent major international conferences. Those efforts should produce tangible progress towards the defined goals of development. Space technology was one of the most promising tools available for giving effect to the recommendations on development, particularly those made by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 3 to 14 June 1992. The Secretary-General had also stressed the importance of inter-agency coordination in development activities. Efforts should therefore be made to identify key areas for inter-agency cooperation and coordination in space activities, and to develop practical schemes that would lead to tangible improvements in living conditions.
3. The Meeting adopted the agenda contained in annex II of the present report.

I. SUBSTANTIVE QUESTIONS CONSIDERED AT THE MEETING

A. Implementation of the recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (agenda item 4)

B. Coordination of plans and programmes and exchange of views on current activities in the practical applications of space technology and related areas (agenda item 5)

1. Discussion of current and future plans of common interest, including consideration of the actual activities of United Nations organizations in the area of space science and technology and its applications as they relate to their mandated programmes (agenda item 5 (a))

4. It was decided to consider agenda items 4 and 5 (a) above together.
5. The Director of the Office for Outer Space Affairs of the United Nations and the Expert on Space Applications informed the Meeting of the progress made by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its subcommittees in implementing the recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE 82), and of other matters of inter-agency interest.
6. The Meeting noted the progress made through the United Nations Programme on Space Applications in the establishment of the proposed regional centres for space science and technology education in the regions of Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean and Western Asia. The Meeting also noted that the General Assembly, in its resolution 50/27 of 7 November 1995, had endorsed the recommendation of the Committee that those centres should be established on the basis of affiliation to the United Nations as early as possible. The Meeting was informed that the inauguration ceremony of the Regional Centre for Space Science and Technology Education for the region of Asia and the Pacific had

taken place in India on 1 November 1995, and that negotiations were under way with the Governments concerned in the other regions towards the establishment of other centres in the near future.

7. The Meeting recognized the value of the concept of the above-mentioned regional centres, and commended the Office for Outer Space Affairs for its efforts in support of the initiative. Some representatives expressed their wish to participate in the programmes, and offered to share their experience in the establishment of similar centres in their areas of competence. Following a presentation by the Office for Outer Space Affairs, several representatives made substantive comments on the model curricula for the centres, which had been prepared to provide each centre with a benchmark of the academic level necessary for international recognition.

8. The representatives of the organizations reported on their current activities and plans for 1996, 1997 and beyond. They noted that they were continuing to implement the relevant recommendations of UNISPACE 82 (A/CONF.101/10), mostly as part of ongoing programmes. In that connection, an exchange of views followed regarding how best to coordinate future activities.

9. The Meeting noted that the Economic Commission for Africa, through the activities of its regional remote sensing centres, and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, through the steps taken to implement the recommendations of the Ministerial Conference on Space Applications for Development in Asia and the Pacific, held at Beijing in September 1994, had been successfully addressing the recommendations of UNISPACE 82. The Meeting further recognized that the regional commissions had an important role to play in assisting in the harmonization and coordination of the space-related activities of centres at the regional level.

10. The Meeting concluded that efforts should continue to be focused on the identification of areas where the interests of different agencies coincided, and where coordinated actions could be undertaken.

11. The Meeting also noted with appreciation the strong emphasis given by the General Assembly, in its resolution 50/27, and by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, to the importance of cooperation between organizations in the United Nations system, and agreed to keep the Committee informed of the progress made in their activities.

12. The Meeting further stressed the importance of continued cooperation and coordination between the organizations in the United Nations system that pursued activities relating to outer space, and that were represented at the Meeting. The Meeting reiterated its agreement that through the inter-agency process, ways and means should be found to advance the views of each organization at the conferences of other organizations. In that connection, it was observed that each organization should continue the useful practice of apprising its member States of the important issues that should be followed up by those member States in other forums.

2. Consideration of matters to be included in the report of the Secretary-General on the programmes of work of United Nations organizations (agenda item 5 (b))

13. The Meeting had before it the draft annual report of the Secretary-General entitled "Coordination of outer space activities within the United Nations system: programme of work for 1996, 1997 and future years". It was the twenty-first report to be submitted to the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, in which information from organizations in the United Nations system was presented in an integrated form, and planned activities were outlined by field of applications.

14. The Meeting noted that, in accordance with the agreement reached by the Administrative Committee on Coordination during its annual session in 1984 (ACC/1984/PG/8, para. 13), the draft report currently consisted of two major sections: one containing a summary of major planned activities and programmes,

without reference to the organizations concerned; and the other containing a description of the future programmes of the individual organizations concerned.

15. The draft report contained information on activities and programmes involving the applications of space technology in the fields of remote sensing and Geographic Information Systems (GIS), communications and navigation, meteorology and hydrology, basic space science, safety aspects and other related fields. It highlighted activities carried out jointly by the organizations concerned through cooperative programmes, and included those carried out separately within their areas of competence. Those activities included, for the above-mentioned fields: assistance in education and training through training courses, workshops, seminars and fellowships; expert services and survey missions to the countries concerned and conduct of studies on pilot projects or implementation of projects with operational applications of technology; and dissemination or exchange of information on the status of technology or operational systems. The Meeting noted that the planned activities reflected the efforts of organizations to implement the recommendations of UNISPACE 82.

16. The draft report was discussed in detail, and a number of suggestions and comments were made. The Meeting adopted the report, on the understanding that the changes agreed upon would be incorporated in the final text, to be submitted by the Secretary-General in document A/AC.105/631 to the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee at its thirty-third session, to be held from 12 to 23 February 1996.

C. In-depth review of the cooperation of United Nations organizations in remote sensing and related GIS activities: remote sensing data policy for requirements of the organizations of the United Nations system and implementation of the recommendations of Agenda 21 (agenda item 6)

17. In its consideration of the item, the Meeting addressed a number of issues, and made a brief evaluation of activities supported in developing countries by organizations in the United Nations system. The Meeting focused on what the emphasis of such support should be in the future. Issues addressed in that context included: conferences, workshops and seminars on the applications of new and advanced systems; training and education programmes; institution-building; project formulation and execution; exchange of information; and other areas of inter-agency cooperation.

18. The Meeting noted that there were many areas that needed close attention. It recalled that at its previous session, it had discussed in detail the policy adopted by the European Organization for the Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites (EUMETSAT) of charging a fee for access to direct read-out Meteosat high-resolution imager (HRI) data. It also recalled, first, its recommendation that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee might wish to consider the implications of that matter, and make its views known to EUMETSAT, and, secondly, its agreement that concerned organizations in the United Nations system should pursue the matter through their respective heads.

19. The Meeting noted that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, at its thirty-second session in 1995, had recognized the need for continuing free access to data from operational meteorological satellites. It further noted that the Committee, at its thirty-eighth session in 1995, had once again stressed the need for the international community to utilize remote sensing data in an effort to fully implement the recommendations contained in Agenda 21,³ adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, and had recognized the example of international cooperation displayed by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) through the exchange of meteorological data as provided for in resolution 11.4/1 adopted by the twelfth World Meteorological Congress of WMO on 21 June 1995.

20. The Meeting was informed that, as of September 1995, EUMETSAT had commenced implementation of the policy of charging a fee for access to direct read-out Meteosat HRI data. It was further informed that those countries with a per capita gross national product of more than 2,000 United States dollars per year would be subject to an annual fee of 80,000 European Currency Units for data access. The Meeting noted

with concern the recent decision of EUMETSAT to consider activities of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in connection with the African Real-Time Environmental Monitoring using Imaging Satellites (ARTEMIS) project as commercial, and therefore subject to a higher annual fee.

21. The Meeting voiced deep concern that such a policy of charging a fee for access to satellite data, if applied to other organizations in the United Nations system or if followed by other satellite operators, could severely limit the capability of developing countries and organizations in the United Nations system to carry out space activities.

22. The Meeting agreed that since WMO was the only organization in the United Nations system invited as an observer to attend meetings of EUMETSAT, the highest-ranking officials of other organizations in the United Nations system should inform the Secretary-General of WMO of their contacts with EUMETSAT. It also agreed that every effort should be made to document all projects in which United Nations bodies assisted national meteorological services of their member States, and to ensure that EUMETSAT and WMO were made aware of such projects.

23. The Meeting agreed that in its deliberations on matters relating to remote sensing, several important points had been identified for discussion at future meetings. It was noted that discussions should continue on those points and other selected issues because, unlike other emerging areas of technology, such as space manufacturing, the benefits of which were not yet apparent as far as developing countries were concerned, remote sensing was definitely an important tool for those countries.

24. The Meeting took note of the need for further inter-agency consultation on, and coordination of, the activities and programmes of the organizations in the United Nations system, particularly in view of the follow-up activities to be undertaken in response to Agenda 21. The Meeting agreed that the in-depth review of the cooperation of organizations in the United Nations system in remote sensing and related GIS activities should be continued at its next session.

D. Inter-agency coordination in matters relating to the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (agenda item 7)

25. The Meeting was informed of the progress made in the discussions conducted on a third UNISPACE conference by the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and by the Committee during their sessions in 1995. It had before it document A/AC.105/575/Add.1, which had been submitted to the Subcommittee, and document A/AC.105/1995/CRP.7, which had been submitted to the Committee.

26. The Meeting noted the agreement by the Committee and subsequently by the General Assembly, in its resolution 50/27, that a third UNISPACE conference could be held before the turn of the century. The Meeting took note of the recommendation of the Committee that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, at its thirty-third session in 1996, should aim at completing its work on developing and refining a framework that would make it possible to consider every means of achieving the desired ends, as well as to evaluate proposals made by the Committee at its thirty-ninth session in the same year. It further noted that, on the basis of the work of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, the Committee would consider all issues relating to the possible holding of a third UNISPACE conference, including other means of achieving the objectives of the conference, with a view to making a final decision on the matter at its session in 1996.

27. The Meeting agreed that an important matter that should be dealt with by the proposed conference was the protection of intellectual property such as inventions and databases relating to activities in outer space, including direct transnational satellite broadcasting.

28. The Meeting expressed the hope that in scheduling an eventual third UNISPACE conference, due consideration would be given to the calendar of major activities planned by organizations in the United Nations system.

II. CONSIDERATION OF AN INTER-AGENCY SPACE APPLICATIONS PROJECT

29. The Meeting noted that the Secretary-General in *An Agenda for Development 1995* had emphasized the importance of operational coordination within the United Nations system for development activities in order to achieve the benefits of a unified system, while preserving the strength of the current approach. It also noted that the Secretary-General had listed several objectives to be attained, including the strengthening of United Nations capabilities in the linking of emergency relief and development and in the promotion of preventive and curative development.

30. The Meeting recognized the potential contribution of space technology to socio-economic development, particularly in the area of disaster prevention, warning and relief. In that connection, the Meeting noted with interest the project proposal by the Office for Outer Space Affairs regarding disaster warning for small island developing states. The Meeting reviewed the proposal in detail, and agreed that it should be submitted to other organizations involved in related activities for their consideration and comments, in particular the secretariat of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction. Some representatives suggested that a volunteer working group might be established to review the feedback from those other organizations and to refine the concept of the project when the proposal had further evolved.

31. The Meeting further noted the initiatives of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications in implementing the project entitled "Cooperative information network linking scientists, educators, professionals and decision makers in Africa" (COPINE), which would establish an information network linking institutions in Africa and institutions in Europe through the use of communication satellites. The participants exchanged views and made several comments on the COPINE project.

III. OTHER MATTERS

32. The Meeting discussed various means of better coordinating its work, especially through the use of new technologies. The Internet and its various services, including electronic mail, the File Transfer Protocol, name lists and the World Wide Web (WWW), were identified as highly useful for achieving that purpose. Various agencies informed the Meeting of already existing home pages on WWW. The Meeting agreed that the use of the Internet should be further expanded as a means of strengthening inter-agency coordination, and requested the Office for Outer Space Affairs to determine whether such an expanded service could be ensured, and to act as its central coordinator.

33. The Meeting agreed that the Office for Outer Space Affairs could serve as a coordinating node for accessing space-related information of agencies in the United Nations system. For that purpose, it further agreed that the home page of the Office for Outer Space Affairs should contain pointers to access the home pages of other agencies. To that end, the Meeting suggested that interested participating agencies should provide their WWW addresses for inclusion in the home page of the Office for Outer Space Affairs.

34. The Meeting noted with satisfaction that additional artifacts had been contributed to the permanent Exhibit on International Cooperation in Utilizing the Benefits of Space Technology for Improving Life on Earth and for Protecting the Environment, which was housed at the United Nations Office at Vienna. It further noted that the work of several organizations in the United Nations system were reflected in the Exhibit.

IV. FUTURE PROGRAMME OF WORK

35. The Meeting reiterated the importance of continuing its meetings on an annual basis, in order to better coordinate activities relating to outer space within the United Nations system. Various intergovernmental committees, particularly the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, had expressed concern about the duplication of efforts in the work of various organizations in the United Nations system. In that connection, the Meeting noted that its own work had helped to allay those concerns, and that the committees had commended its work in their recent reports.

36. The Meeting, noting the recommendation of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee concerning the necessity of ensuring continuous and effective consultations and coordination in the field of outer space activities between organizations in the United Nations system and of avoiding duplication of activities (A/AC.105/605, para. 38), agreed that the present report should be brought to the attention of the Subcommittee.

37. The Meeting considered the need for further inter-agency consultation on, and coordination of, the activities and programmes of the organizations in the United Nations system, particularly in view of the implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE 82 and the follow-up activities to be undertaken in response to Agenda 21. It was therefore agreed that the provisional agenda of the next Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities should include the following major items on its provisional agenda:

1. Implementation of the recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.
2. Coordination of plans and programmes and exchange of views on current activities in the practical application of space technology and related areas:
 - (a) Discussion of current and future plans of common interest, including consideration of the actual activities of United Nations organizations in the area of space science and technology and its applications as they relate to their mandated programmes;
 - (b) Consideration of matters to be included in the report of the Secretary-General on the programme of work of United Nations organizations.
3. In-depth review of the cooperation of United Nations organizations in remote sensing and related GIS activities: remote sensing data policy for requirements of the organizations of the United Nations system and implementation of the recommendations of Agenda 21.
4. Review of progress on the proposed inter-agency space applications project for disaster prevention, mitigation and relief.
5. Inter-agency coordination in matters relating to the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.
6. Enhancement of coordination among the organizations within the United Nations system through the use of advanced information technologies.
7. Other matters.

38. The Meeting agreed that it should continue its in-depth review of cooperation between United Nations organizations in some specific areas of space applications, such as remote sensing, communications, navigation, meteorology and related technology transfer, education, intellectual property and spin-off benefits,

in order to ensure that the activities of the United Nations system in those areas should be suitably integrated and that the services rendered to Member States should fully meet their requirements in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

39. Since interested agencies would be represented at meetings of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, the Meeting agreed that its future sessions should be convened at Vienna in June in conjunction with the annual sessions of the Committee. That agreement was made without prejudice to any invitation by an interested agency to host a future session at its headquarters.

40. The Meeting expressed its disappointment that some of the organizations in the United Nations system that were active in space activities and had been invited to participate were not present at the current session. It noted that several organizations had been unable to participate because of financial restrictions. Nevertheless, recognizing the importance of its work, the Meeting urged all concerned organizations in the United Nations system to actively participate in its future sessions.

41. The Meeting expressed its appreciation to the Chairman for the efficient manner in which he had guided the work of the Meeting, and thanked the Office for Outer Space Affairs for acting as host and providing secretariat support.

Notes

¹United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.I.15.

²United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.I.16.

³*Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992 (A/CONF.151/26/Rev.1 (Vol. I and Vol. I/Corr.1, Vol. II, Vol. III and Vol. III/Corr.1))*(United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigenda), vol. I: *Resolutions adopted by the Conference*, resolution 1, annex II.

*Annex I***LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

Chairman: V. KOJARNOVITCH (United Nations Industrial Development Organization)

Secretary: S. CAMACHO (United Nations)

United Nations

Office for Outer Space Affairs	N. Jasentuliyana (Deputy to the Director-General, United Nations Office at Vienna) A. A. Abiodun P. Lála H. Haubold V. Kotelnikov H. George T. Chiku (Assistant Secretary)
United Nations International Drug Control Programme	D. Buddenberg
Economic Commission for Africa	O. Nino Flück
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific	Changchui He

Specialized agencies and other organizations in the United Nations system

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	M. Abtahi
International Civil Aviation Organization	E. R. Godberson
World Health Organization	C. M. Lee
International Telecommunication Union	P. Korobnikov
World Meteorological Organization	D. Hinsman
World Intellectual Property Organization	N. Svendsen
International Atomic Energy Agency	I. Thompson

Annex II

AGENDA

1. Opening of the meeting.
2. Election of the Chairman of the meeting.
3. Adoption of the agenda.
4. Implementation of the recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.
5. Coordination of plans and programmes and exchange of views on current activities in the practical applications of space technology and related areas:
 - (a) Discussion of current and future plans of common interest, including consideration of the actual activities of United Nations organizations in the area of space science and technology and its applications as they relate to their mandated programmes:
 - (i) United Nations Programmes on Space Applications;
 - (ii) Programmes of the other organizations;
 - (b) Consideration of matters to be included in the report of the Secretary-General on the programme of work of United Nations organizations.
6. In-depth review of the cooperation of United Nations organizations in remote sensing and related GIS activities: remote sensing data policy for requirements of the organizations of the United Nations system and implementation of the recommendations of Agenda 21.
7. Inter-agency coordination in matters relating to the Third United Nations Conference on Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.
8. Other matters:
 - (a) Consideration of inter-agency space applications projects;
 - (b) Future meetings;
 - (c) Additional matters.